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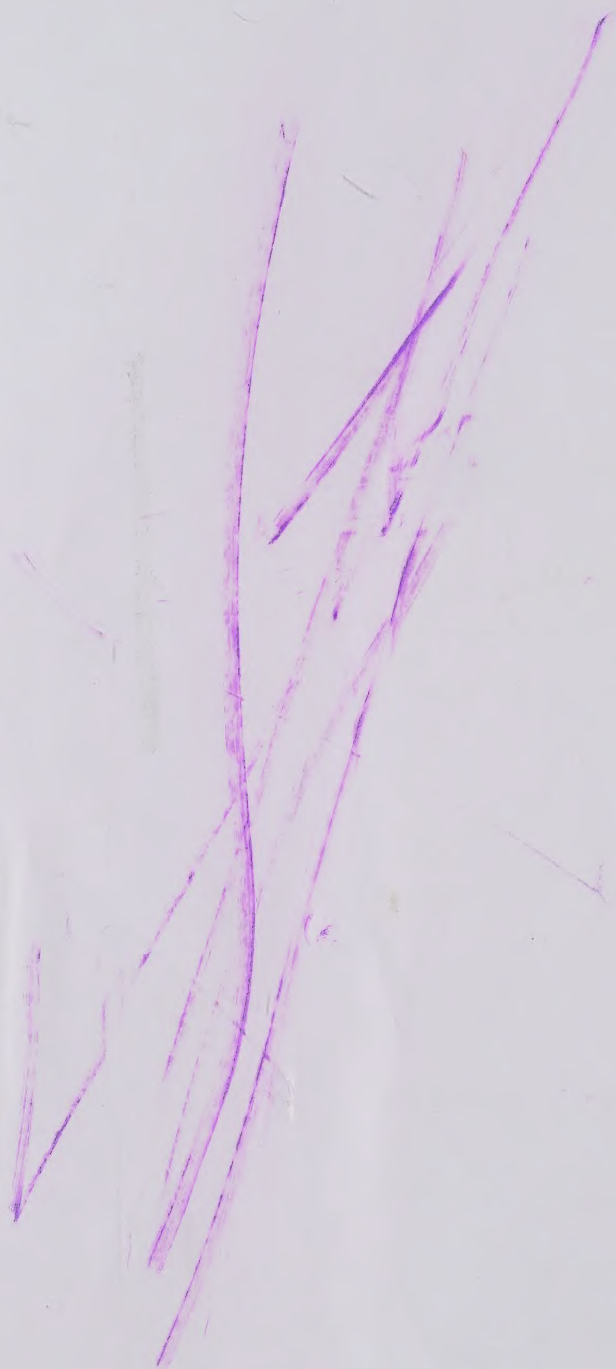
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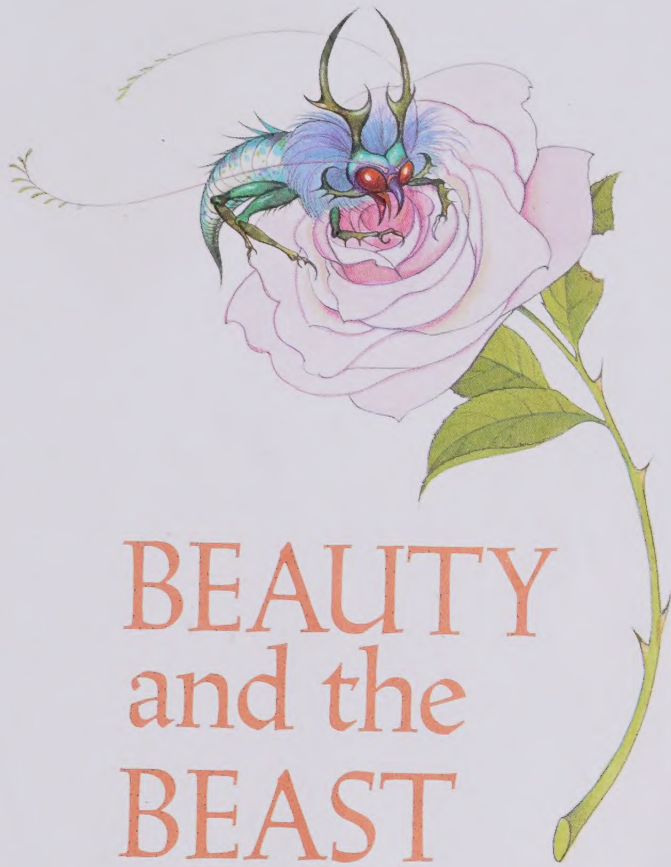
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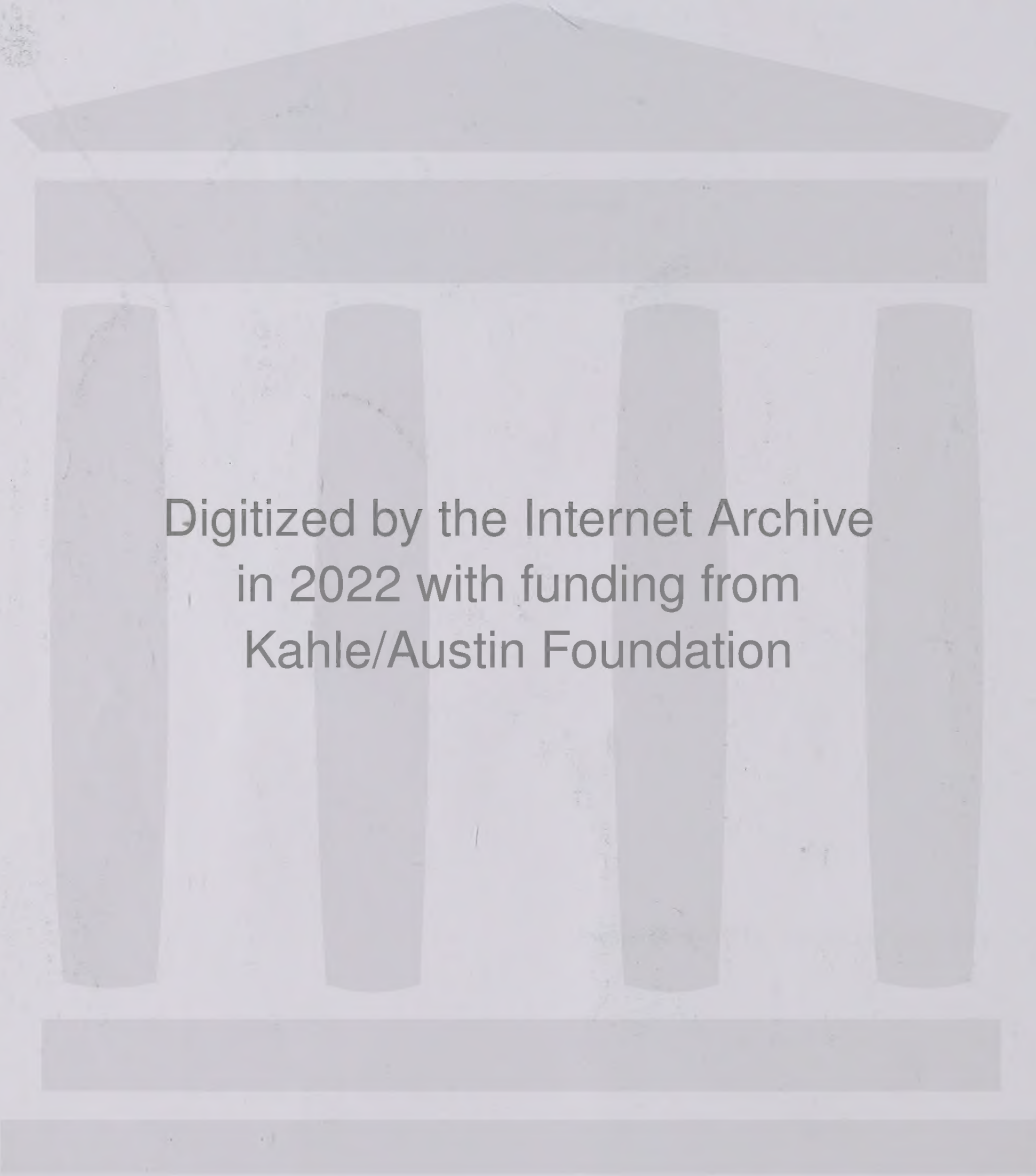
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BEAUTY
and the
BEAST



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BEAUTY and the BEAST

A fairy tale by
MARIE LEPRINCE DE BEAUMONT

Translated by
RICHARD HOWARD

Illustrated by
HILARY KNIGHT
With an afterword by
JEAN COCTEAU





SIMON AND SCHUSTER BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

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ONCE UPON A TIME there was a very rich merchant who had six children, three boys and three girls; and since he was also very wise, he spared no expense in the education of his children, and gave them teachers of every kind. His daughters were all very beautiful, but the youngest was admired more than the others, and when she was a little girl no one called her anything but Beauty; as the years passed, people still used the nickname, which made her sisters very jealous. Now this youngest child who was more beautiful than her sisters was also sweeter than they. The two older girls were very proud, for they were rich; they acted like great

ladies and refused to play with other merchants' daughters—only the nobility could be their friends; they were always going off to balls, plays, or promenades, and mocked their younger sister, who spent most of her time reading good books. As it was widely known that these girls were so wealthy, several great merchants had asked for their hands; but the two older girls replied that they would never marry unless the proposal came from a duke or a count at the very least. Beauty (for as I have already told you, that was the youngest daughter's name), Beauty, however, graciously thanked those who sought her in marriage, but answered that she was too young and hoped to keep her father company for some years to come.

Suddenly the merchant lost his fortune, and all he had left that he could call his own was a cottage in the country, far from town. He wept when he explained to his children that they would have to live in that cottage from now on and become farmers in order to remain alive. His two older daughters replied that they preferred not to leave town, and that they had plenty of admirers who would be only too happy to marry them, even without fortunes: in this the young ladies were quite mistaken, for their admirers would no longer even look at them, now that they were poor. Since no one could endure their haughty ways, people said: "They do not deserve our pity, and we are not sorry to see their pride humbled. Let them act like great ladies as they tend their sheep." But the same people also said: "For Beauty's sake, we are truly sorry for their misfortune. What a sweet girl she is! How kindly she spoke to poor folk! She was always so gentle, so good!"

There were even several young gentlemen who asked for her hand, though she had not a penny to her name; she told them, though, that she could not bear to abandon her poor father in his misfortune, and that she would accompany him to his country cottage, there to comfort him



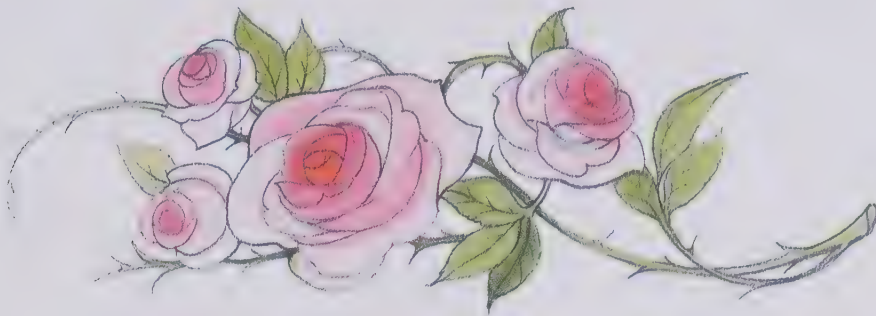
in his distress and help him at work. At first poor Beauty, too, was heartily sorry to lose her fortune, but she told herself, "However many tears I weep, they will not bring back my father's wealth. We must try to be happy without money."

When they moved to their country cottage, the merchant and his three sons began plowing the fields. Beauty got up at four every morning and lost no time cleaning the house and preparing the meals for her family. At first she found this burdensome, for she was not used to working as a servant; but in two months' time, she grew stronger, and her fatigue even seemed to improve her health. When her work was done, she spent her time reading, playing the harpsichord, or singing at her spinning wheel. Her two sisters, however, were bored to death; they spent the mornings in bed, strolled about all afternoon, and their only pastime was regretting their fine-clothes and their parties. "Look at our stupid sister," they exclaimed to each other. "Her soul is so base that she is content with her wretched lot!" The good merchant did not agree with his older daughters. He knew that Beauty far excelled her sisters in the social graces. He admired the girl's virtue and still more her patience; for her sisters, not content with letting her do all the housework, insulted her at every opportunity.

The family had been living in solitude for over a year, when the merchant received a letter informing him that a ship bearing a cargo of his merchandise had just reached port safe and sound. This news fairly dazzled the two older sisters, who believed at last the time had come for them to leave this wilderness which they found so tiresome; and when they saw their father making ready to set out for town, they begged him to bring them dresses, fur mantles, wigs, and all kinds of frippery. Beauty asked for nothing, suspecting that all the money from her father's merchandise would not be enough to buy what her sisters desired.

“Is there nothing you would like?” her father asked her.

“Since you’re kind enough to think of me,” she answered, “please bring me a rose, for none grow hereabout.”



It was not that Beauty cared for a rose particularly, but she feared to condemn, by her example, the behavior of her sisters, who would have said that she asked for nothing in order to call attention to herself. The good man set out; but when he reached town, he found himself subject to a lawsuit over his merchandise, and after a great many difficulties he started back to the cottage as poor as he had been before. He had no more than thirty leagues to cover before reaching his house and was already rejoicing at the thought of seeing his children again; yet when he had to pass through a dark forest in order to reach his goal, he lost his way. It was snowing hard and the wind was so high that twice it threw him from his horse. Once night had fallen he feared he would die of hunger or cold, or that he would be eaten by the wolves he heard howling in the distance. Suddenly, looking down a long lane of trees, he saw a light that seemed to be coming from a great distance. He made his way toward it and discovered that this light shone from a great palace which was illuminated at every window. The merchant thanked Providence for guiding him, and hastened toward the palace, astonished to find no one in the courtyard. His horse, which had followed him, walked through the wide-open doors of a great stable filled with oats and hay; the poor creature was dying of



hunger and began munching at once. The merchant left his horse in a roomy stall and walked toward the palace itself, where he found no one; but having proceeded into a great hall, he found there a merry fire and a table covered with good things to eat, and only one place set. Since rain and snow had soaked him to the bone, he drew near the fire in order to dry himself, thinking: "The master of the house, or his servants, will surely forgive me the liberty I have taken, and no doubt will soon appear."

He waited for some time, but when the clock chimed eleven without his having seen a soul, he could endure his hunger no longer, and seized a roast chicken which he devoured in two bites, trembling the while. He also drank several glasses of wine and, having grown bolder, left the hall and passed through several great apartments, all magnificently furnished. At length he found a room with a splendid bed inside, and, since it was past midnight and he was weary, he decided to close the door and go to sleep.

It was ten in the morning when he wakened the next day, and he was surprised indeed to find a handsome suit of clothes in place of his own, which had become dreadfully soiled. "To be sure," he said to himself, "this is the palace of some good fairy who has taken pity on my lot." He looked out the window and no longer saw snow but lovely gardens full of flowers instead. He returned to the great hall where he had dined the night before and discovered a little table with a pot of chocolate upon it. "Thank you, my lady," he said aloud, "for remembering my breakfast." The good man, after drinking his chocolate, left the palace to look for his horse, and, as he passed under a trellis of roses, he remembered Beauty's request and plucked a spray upon which several were blooming. Therewith he heard a great noise and saw coming toward him a Beast so horrible that he nearly fainted.





"You are indeed ungrateful," the Beast said in a terrible voice. "I have saved your life, received you in my palace, and to thank me for my pains you steal my roses, which I love better than anything else in the world. You must die to make amends for this misdeed! I shall give you a quarter of an hour, and no more, to make your peace with God."

The merchant threw himself to his knees, clasped his hands, and implored the Beast: "My Lord, forgive me, I had not thought of offending you by picking a rose for one of my daughters, who had asked me for it."

"I am not called *My Lord*," answered the monster. "I am called Beast. I have no liking for compliments, I prefer people to say what they think; so do not hope to win me by your flatteries. But you say you have daughters; I consent to pardon you, on condition that one of your daughters comes to die in your place of her own free will; do not plead with me, be gone; and if your daughters refuse to die for you, swear that you will return in three months."

The good man had no intention of sacrificing one of his daughters to this hideous monster; but he told himself: "At least I shall have the pleasure of embracing them one last time."

So he swore to return, and the Beast told him he was free to leave when he would. "But," the monster added, "I do not want you to go away empty-handed. Return to the chamber where you slept and you will find a great empty chest. In it you can put whatever you like. I shall send it after you."

With this the Beast withdrew, and the good man reflected: "If I must die, at least I shall have the comfort of leaving my poor children with bread in their mouths."

He returned to the chamber where he had slept, and having found there a great quantity of gold pieces, he filled the huge chest the Beast had

described, closed it, and having mounted his horse, which he found in the stable, he left the palace with a sadness equal to his joy upon entering it. His horse found its way through the forest and in a few hours the good man reached his cottage. His children gathered around him; but instead of enjoying their caresses, the merchant began to weep as he looked at them. He was holding in his hand the spray of roses he had brought for Beauty; he gave it to her, saying, "Beauty, take these roses, they will cost your poor father dear." And then he told his family of the dreadful adventure that had befallen him. Upon hearing his story, the two older sisters cried out against Beauty, who shed no tears.

"See what the pride of this little wretch has done!" they exclaimed. "Why could she not have asked for adornments, like ourselves? But no, the young lady had to call attention to herself; she is causing our father's death and she doesn't even cry!"

"There would be no use in that," Beauty answered. "Why should I cry for my father's death? He will not die. Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters, I shall surrender to his rage, and I am glad to do so, for by dying I shall have the joy of saving my father and proving my love to him."

"No, sister," Beauty's three brothers said to her, "you will not die, we shall hunt down this monster and ourselves perish under his blows if we cannot kill him."

"Have no such hopes, my children," the merchant admonished. "The power of this Beast is so great that I see no way of bringing about his defeat. I am touched by Beauty's good heart, but I would not expose her to death. I am old, I have not much longer to live; thus I will lose only a few years of life, which I regret only for your sake, my dear children."

"I assure you, Father," Beauty replied, "that you will not return to

that palace without me: you cannot prevent me from following you. Young though I am, I am not so attached to life, and I prefer to be devoured by this monster rather than die of the grief your loss would afford me."

No matter what was said, Beauty insisted that she would set out for the beautiful palace; and her sisters were glad, for the young girl's virtues had filled them with jealousy. The merchant was so concerned over his grief at losing his daughter that he did not think of the chest he had filled with gold; but no sooner had he retired to his room for the night than he was astonished to find it beside his bed. He resolved to say nothing to his children of this new wealth, for his older daughters would have insisted upon returning to town, and he had decided to spend the rest of his days in the country; but he confided this secret to Beauty, who informed him that several gentlemen had visited the house in his absence and that two of them were in love with her sisters. She begged her father to permit them to marry; for she was so kind-hearted that she loved her older sisters and readily forgave all the harm they had done her. These wicked girls rubbed their eyes with an onion in order to cry when it was time for Beauty to set out with her father, but her brothers wept real tears as did the merchant: only Beauty was not crying, for she did not wish to add to their grief. The horse took the road to the palace, and by evening they had caught sight of it, lit up at every window as it had been the first time. The horse went to the stable by itself, and the good man and his daughter walked into the great hall where they found a magnificently provided table laid with two places. The merchant did not have the heart to eat, but Beauty, trying to appear calm, sat down at the table and served him; then she said to herself: "The Beast must want to fatten me up before eating me, since he gives me so fine a dinner."

Once they had dined, they heard a great noise and the merchant wept



and said farewell to his poor daughter, for he knew the Beast was upon them. Beauty could not keep from trembling when she saw its horrible face; but she mustered her courage as best she could, and when the monster asked her if she had come of her own accord, she answered, trembling, that she had.

“You are kind indeed,” the Beast said to her, “and I am obliged to



you. My good man, you must leave tomorrow morning and never think of coming here again. Good night, Beauty."

"Good night, Beast," she answered; and thereupon the monster withdrew.

"Oh, my daughter," the merchant cried, embracing Beauty. "I am already half-dead with fear. I beg you, leave me here."

"No, Father," Beauty replied resolutely. "You must leave tomorrow morning and trust to Providence, which may take pity upon me."

They went to bed fearing they would not sleep at all, yet no sooner were they in their beds than their eyes closed. In her sleep, Beauty saw a lady who said to her: "I am pleased with your kind heart, Beauty; the good deed you are doing by sacrificing your life to save your father's will not go unrewarded."

When she awakened, Beauty told this dream to her father; and although it consoled him a little, he could not help shedding bitter tears when it came time to separate from his beloved daughter.

Once he had gone, Beauty sat down in the great hall and began to cry too; but since she was a brave girl, she soon plucked up her spirits and resolved not to despair in the little time she had left to live: for she was convinced that the Beast would devour her that very evening. She decided to walk about meanwhile, and explore this beautiful palace. She could not help admiring its beauty; but she was even more astonished to discover a door on which was written: *Beauty's Apartment*. She quickly opened this door and was dazzled by the magnificence that reigned inside; but what caught her eyes and surprised her most was a splendid library, a harpsichord, and several volumes of music. "Evidently I am not to be idle or bored," she whispered; then she thought: "If I had only one day to live here, I would not be offered such a store of entertainment."





This thought revived her courage. She went to the bookcase and took out a book on which was written in letters of gold: *Desire, Command. Here you are queen and mistress.*

"Alas," she said with a sigh, "I desire nothing but to see my poor father and to know what he is doing now."

She had thought, not spoken, these words. What was her surprise, glancing into a great mirror, to see in it her own house where her father had just arrived, his face tear-stained and woebegone! Her sisters came to meet him, and despite the grimaces they made in order to seem grief-stricken, the joy they took in their sister's misfortune was evident from their faces. A moment later the vision disappeared and Beauty found herself thinking that the Beast was indeed kind and that she had nothing to fear. At noon she found the table set, and during her dinner she heard lovely music, though she saw no one. That evening, as she was about to sit down to dinner, she heard the terrible noise the Beast made, and could not keep from shuddering.

"Beauty," this monster said to her, "will you permit me to watch you dine?"

"You are the master here," Beauty answered, trembling.

"No," the Beast answered, "there is only a mistress here, and that is you. Order me to go if I disturb you, and I shall leave at once. Tell me, do you not find me hideously ugly?"

"To be sure, I do," Beauty said, "for I cannot lie. But I find you very kind as well."

"That is as it may be," the monster replied, "but not only am I ugly, I have no wit. I know well that I am only a stupid beast."

"It is not stupid," Beauty returned, "to believe you have no wit. No fool ever knew he was stupid."





"Dine well, then, Beauty," the monster said to her, "and try not to be unhappy in your house, for everything is yours and I should be sorry if you were not content."

"How kind you are!" Beauty said. "I confess that I am content in your house. Now that I think of it, you no longer seem to me so ugly."

"Oh lady, I am!" the Beast answered. "I have a good heart but I am a monster."

"There are many men who are more monstrous than you," Beauty said, "and I like you better, with the face you have, than those who beneath a human countenance conceal a false, corrupt, ungrateful heart."

"If I had the wit," the Beast replied, "I should pay you a great compliment to thank you; but I am a stupid beast, and all I can say is that I thank you with all my heart."

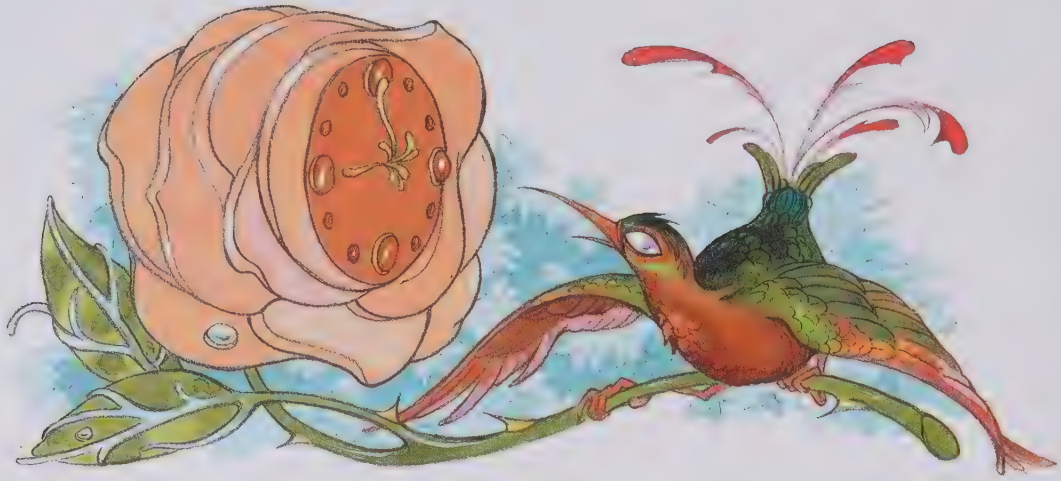
Beauty dined with a good appetite. She had almost no fear of the monster now; yet she almost died of horror when he asked her: "Beauty, will you be my wife?" It was some time before she replied, for she was afraid of arousing the monster's anger by her refusal.

Finally she said, trembling: "No, Beast."

Upon this, the poor monster heaved a sigh and made so dreadful a hissing that all the palace echoed it; but Beauty was soon reassured, for once the Beast had sadly remarked, "Good night then, Beauty," he left the room, turning back from time to time to look at her again. As soon as she was alone, Beauty felt a great compassion for this poor Beast.

"Alas!" she said, "what a pity he should be so ugly; he is so kind!"

Beauty spent three months in this palace, calmly enough. Every evening the Beast visited her, conversed with her during dinner with great good sense but never with what the world calls *wit*. Every day Beauty discovered new virtues in this monster; the habit of seeing him so often had accus-



tomed her to his ugliness, and far from dreading the moment of his appearance, she often glanced at her timepiece to see if it would soon be nine, for the Beast never failed to arrive at that hour. There was only one thing that distressed Beauty: this was that the monster, before withdrawing for the night, always asked her if she would be his wife and seemed filled with grief when she answered no. One day she said to him: "You distress me, Beast; I should like to be able to marry you, but I am too sincere to let you suppose such a thing could ever happen. I shall always be your friend; try to be content with that."

"Indeed I must," the Beast replied. "I know what I am, which is horrible indeed, yet I love you greatly; nonetheless I am only too happy that you are willing to remain here; promise me you will never leave me."

Beauty blushed at these words; she had learned from her magic mirror that her father was sick with grief at having lost her, and she longed to see him again. "To be sure I could promise you never to leave you for good; yet I so long to see my father once more that I shall die of grief if you refuse me this pleasure."

"I had rather die myself," the monster said, "than give you pain; I shall send you home to your father, you will stay there, and your poor Beast will die of grief."

“No,” Beauty answered with a tear, “I am too fond of you to wish to cause your death. I promise to return in eight days. You have let me see that my sisters are married and that my brothers have left home for the army; my father is all alone; let me stay with him a week.”

“You shall be there tomorrow,” the Beast said, “but remember your promise: you need only put your ring on a table upon going to bed—if you wish to return. Good night, Beauty.”

The Beast sighed as was his custom when he spoke these words, and Beauty went to bed disturbed at having saddened him. When she wakened in the morning, she found herself in her father’s house, and having rung a little bell that was beside the bed, she saw the servant-girl come in, who screamed aloud upon catching sight of her. The good man ran to the room upon hearing this outcry, and thought he would die of joy upon discovering his beloved daughter, and they showered embraces upon each other for over a quarter of an hour. After her first transports, Beauty realized she had no clothes to wear once she got out of bed; but the servant-girl told her that in the next room she had just found a great chest full of golden dresses embroidered with diamonds and jewels. Beauty thanked the kind Beast for his considerations: she put on the simplest of these gowns, and told the servant to put away the others, which she wished to give away to her sisters; but no sooner had she spoken these words than the chest vanished. Her father told her the Beast must have wanted her to keep all these things for herself, and immediately the dresses and the chest reappeared where they had been. Beauty finished dressing and meanwhile her sisters were sent for, who hurried to the house with their new husbands. Both girls were extremely unhappy. The eldest had married a handsome young gentleman; but he was so in love with his own face that he paid attention to nothing else from morning until night and despised his own wife’s beauty.





The second sister had married a man of great wit; yet he employed it only to torment everyone around him, starting with his wife. Beauty's sisters nearly died of envy when they saw her dressed like a princess and lovelier than ever. No matter how she caressed them, nothing could smother their jealousy, which greatly increased when she had told them how happy she was. The two jealous creatures walked into the garden to weep their fill and said to each other: "Why should this wretched girl be happier than we? Are we not more agreeable than she?"

"Sister," the eldest said, "I have an idea: let us try to keep her here longer than eight days; her foolish Beast will fly into a rage because she has broken her word, and perhaps will devour her."

"How right you are, sister," replied the other. "But for that, we must make much of her."

And having come to this decision, they returned to the cottage and lavished such attention upon their sister that Beauty wept for joy. When the eight days had passed, the two sisters tore their hair and ranted and raved so greatly that she promised to remain eight more.

Yet Beauty reproached herself for the grief she was causing her poor Beast, whom she loved with all her heart; and she was sad at no longer seeing him. On the tenth night she spent in her father's house, she dreamed she was back in the palace garden and that she saw the Beast lying on the grass, about to die, and bemoaning her ingratitude. Beauty awakened with a start and shed many tears.

"Am I not wicked," she said, "to cause pain to the Beast who has always been so kind to me? Is it his fault if he is so ugly and has so little wit? He is kind, which is worth more than all the rest. Why should I not marry him? I would be happier with him than my sisters are with their husbands. It is neither the beauty nor the wit of a husband that

makes a woman happy; it is the virtue of his character, his kindness and devotion: the Beast has all these good qualities. I do not love the Beast; but I feel respect, friendship, and gratitude for him. Come, I must not make him unhappy; I should reproach myself for such ingratitude all my life long.”

Upon these words Beauty stood up, put her ring on the table, and





went back to bed. No sooner was she between the sheets than she fell asleep, and when she awakened in the morning she saw with delight that she was in the Beast's palace. She dressed magnificently in order to please him and fretted impatiently all day long until nine in the evening, but though the clock struck, the Beast did not appear. The Beauty feared she had caused his death. She ran all through the palace, calling his name; she was in despair. After having looked everywhere, she remembered her dream and ran through the garden toward the pond where she had seen him in her sleep. She found the poor Beast lying unconscious and feared he was dead. She flung herself upon his body without any repugnance for his face; and feeling his heart still beating, she took some water from the pond and flung it upon his face.

The Beast opened his eyes and said to Beauty: "You have forgotten your promise, and the pain of losing you has made me resolve to let myself starve to death; but I shall die content, for I have had the pleasure of seeing you once again."

"No, my dear Beast, you will not die," Beauty said to him. "You will live to become my husband. Herewith I give you my hand, and I swear I shall be yours alone. Alas! I believed I felt only friendship for you, but the distress I suffer makes me realize I could not live without seeing you."

No sooner had Beauty spoken these words than she saw the castle gleaming with lights; fireworks, music, everything promised a celebration; but all these beauties did not distract her eyes: she turned back to her beloved Beast, whose danger made her tremble. Imagine her surprise! The Beast had disappeared, and at her feet she saw only a Prince, as handsome as the God of Love himself, who thanked her for having brought the spell to an end. Although this Prince deserved all her attention, she could not help asking him where the Beast was.



“You see him at your feet,” the Prince replied. “A wicked fairy had condemned me to remain in this form until a beautiful girl should consent to marry me; and she had forbidden me to reveal even a hint of my true wit. And there was no one in the world except you kind enough to be touched by the goodness of my character, and in offering you my crown I cannot begin to repay my obligations to you.”

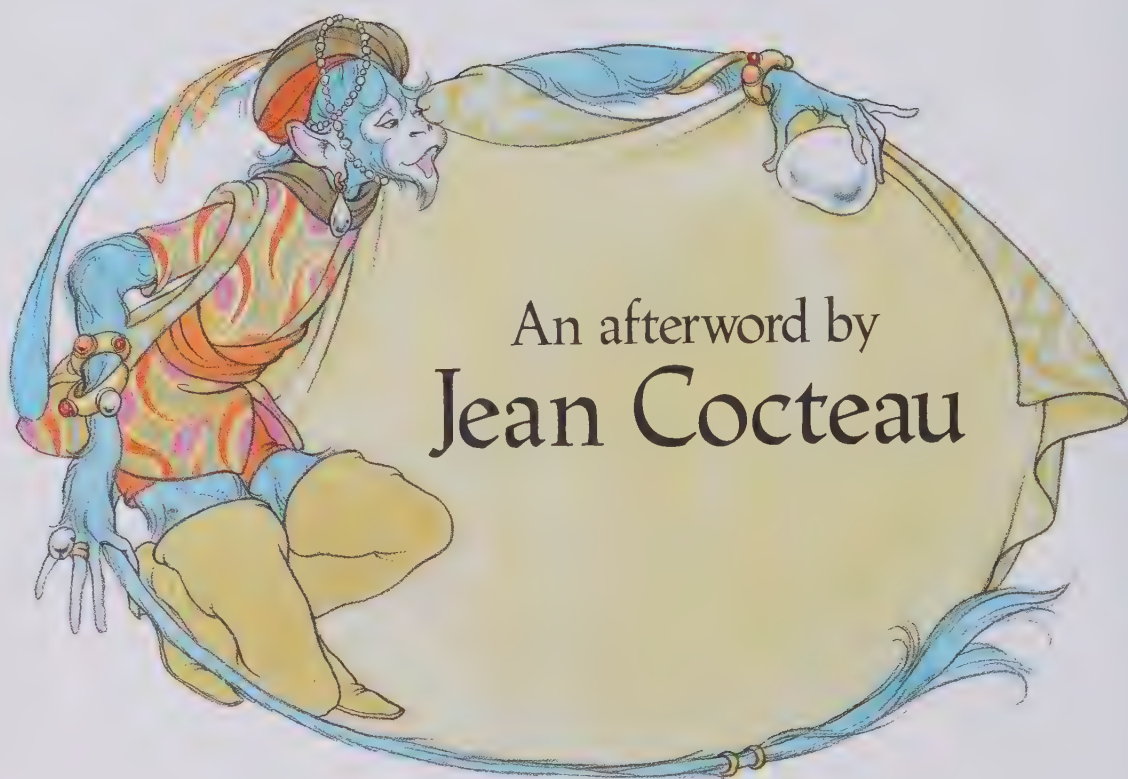
Agreeably surprised, Beauty held out her hand to the handsome Prince, to help him to his feet. Together they walked to the palace, and Beauty almost fainted with happiness on finding in the great hall her father and all her family, whom the lovely lady she had seen in her dream had transported there. “Beauty,” said this lady, who was a powerful fairy, “come and receive the reward of your wise choice: you have preferred virtue over beauty and wit, you deserve to find all of these qualities united in one and the same person. You shall become a great queen; I hope that the throne will not destroy your virtues.

“As for you, young ladies,” the fairy said to Beauty’s sisters, “I know your hearts and all the malice hidden within them: become statues, yet keep your reason beneath the stone that imprisons you. You shall stand at your sister’s palace doors, and I impose no other pain upon you than to be the witnesses of her happiness. You may return to your original state only when you admit your faults; but I greatly fear that you will remain statues forever. Pride, anger, greed, and sloth can be corrected, but the conversion of a wicked and envious heart is a kind of miracle.”

Therewith the fairy waved her hand and transported all those who were in the hall to the Prince’s kingdom. His subjects greeted him with joy and he married Beauty, whose life with her husband was a long and happy one, because it was established upon virtue.







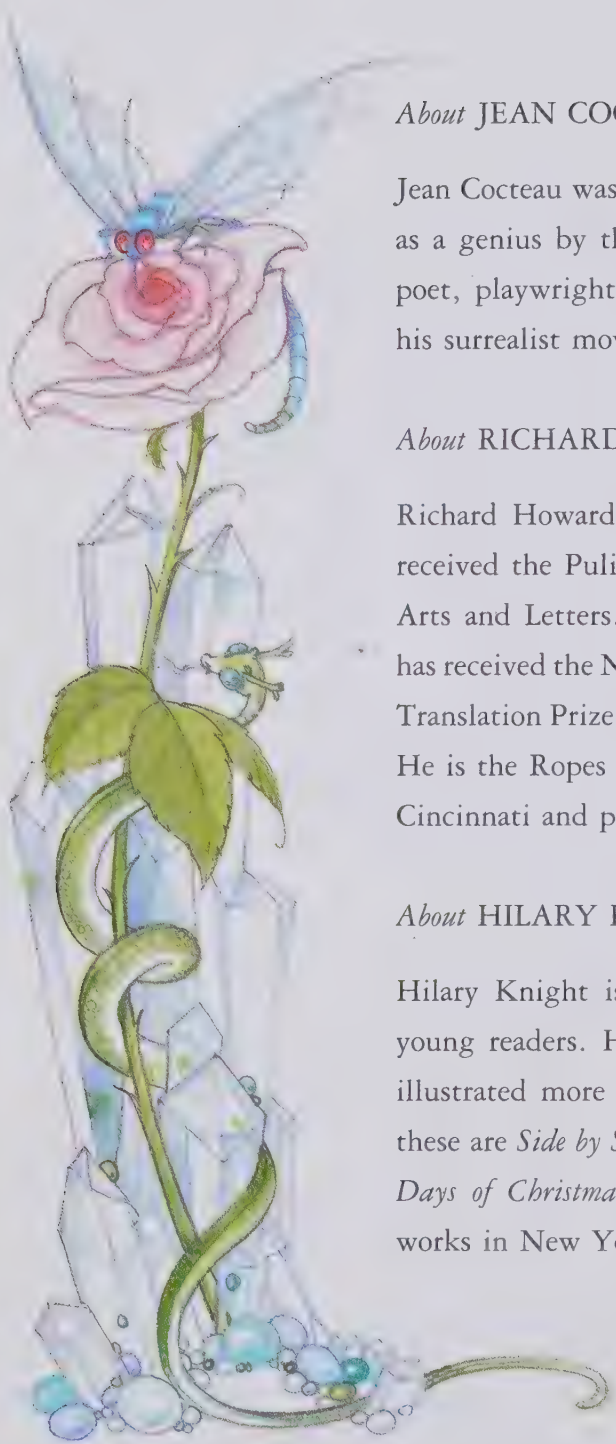
I like imaginary stories better than history, whose truths eventually lose their shape. The lies in stories eventually become a kind of truth or, at least, a mysterious, new, and delightful form of history.

The famous tale of *Beauty and the Beast* is British in origin. Madame Leprince de Beaumont (1711–1780) lived in England for a while and must have heard ghost stories there, as well as rumors of those sons of certain great families who were hidden away because of some birthmark or blemish that might frighten society and dishonor a noble name.

Possibly one of these monsters, shut up in some Scottish castle, gave her the idea of a human beast who bears a noble heart under a frightening appearance and suffers the pangs of hopeless love.

Many people who saw the movie I made of this story would have preferred it if the gentle beast had not turned into Prince Charming; like Beauty, they were disappointed by his transformation. I had decided to remain faithful to the original story but, nonetheless, when the Prince asks Beauty if she is happy, I made her close her eyes and answer: “I shall have to get used to it.”

For ordinary beauty could not easily take the place of the terrible beauty that had won her heart. The whole meaning of the story lies in this little sentence, and in the secret disappointment which the audience shares with Beauty.



About JEAN COCTEAU

Jean Cocteau was born in France in 1889 and, as a young man, embraced as a genius by the art and literary world of pre-World War I Paris. A poet, playwright, novelist and painter, Cocteau is best remembered for his surrealist movies, among them *Beauty and the Beast*.

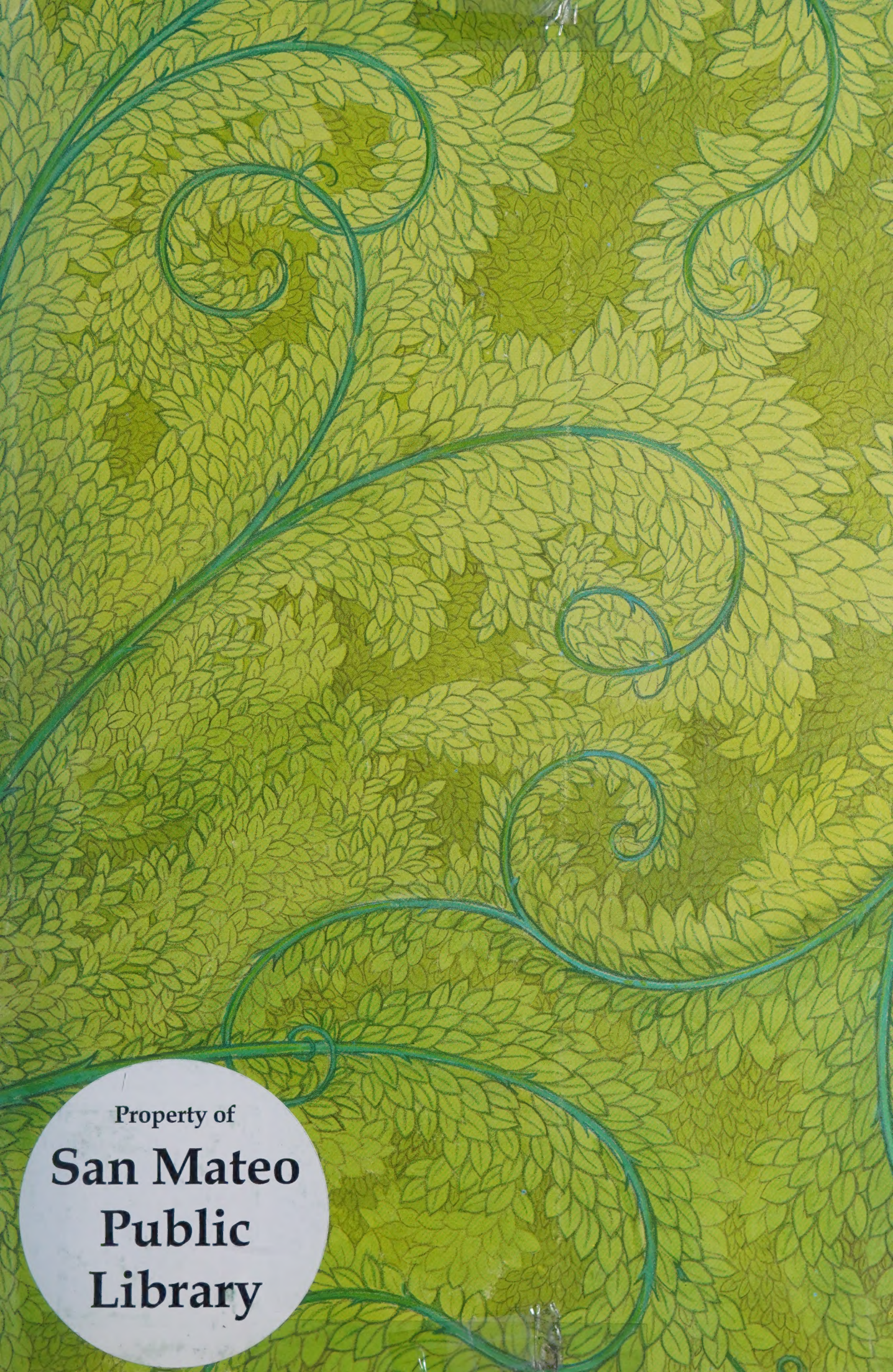
About RICHARD HOWARD

Richard Howard is the author of 9 books of poetry, for which he has received the Pulitzer Prize and membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He is a distinguished translator from the French and has received the National Book Award (for Baudelaire's poems,) the P.E.N. Translation Prize, and the French government's Ordre National du Mérite. He is the Ropes Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Cincinnati and poetry editor of *The New Republic*.

About HILARY KNIGHT

Hilary Knight is one of America's best-loved illustrators of books for young readers. He is perhaps best known for the *Eloise* books, but has illustrated more than sixty others as well. Among the most popular of these are *Side by Side*, *Telephone Time*, *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *Cinderella* and *Screamy Mimi*. Mr. Knight lives and works in New York City.





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